Introduction

This paper is based on the findings of a case study which explores the ways in which teacher identity is shaped and enacted through adult vocational education and training (VET) classroom practices. The study tells a story about the ways in which teachers work with, adapt to, survive and resist discourses of VET, including marketisation, performativity and competency-based education. It raises some important issues centred around VET classrooms as sites of pedagogical resistance and compliance and what constitutes good vocational adult education practice.

The following quote from one of the teacher participants in this study characterises the ways in which teachers in the adult education sector make sense of the complex and changing context in which they work.

I’m like a chameleon really, I can change my colours depending on where I am and what I’m doing…it’s just a matter of survival (Jill).

In response to changing government funding priorities, there has been a shift away from the provision of needs based language and personal development courses for adults in community based contexts, towards the delivery of VET. Much vocational education and training is characterised by competency-based curriculum and driven by the needs of the current labour market as well as economic initiatives such as competitive tendering for short-term course funding. These trends have resulted in changes to the nature of curriculum, assessment, and the purpose and nature of the delivery of courses to adult learners. In turn, these changes affect the ways in which teachers see themselves and carry out their roles as professionals.

Current contexts of adult education: an overview

The non-university adult education sector in Australia is marked by complexity and diversity. It has included Adult Literacy and Basic education (ALBE) courses, English as a Second Language (ESL) courses for immigrants and refugees, interest courses or personal...
development courses, English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students (ELICOS) and Vocational Education and Training (VET). In recent years the fastest growing area of education provision for adults has been the VET sector. This is the result of a government and industry push for a better educated workforce which is "capable of rapid learning and innovation" (Robinson 1998, p.119) in a changing and competitive global marketplace. In Australia, the emergence of vocational education as a priority in the adult education sector occurred at a time when there was a shift towards the marketisation of education in general (Seddon 1997). Thinking about education as a commodity in a demand-driven market rather than a supply-driven market is "part of wider microeconomic reform policy in Australia to pursue competition in the provision and delivery of public utilities and services across a range of areas (such as electricity, water, health, telecommunications and employment and welfare services) that were traditionally provided by public monopolies" (Robinson 1998, p.103). In keeping with general Australian competition policies, initial recommendations of a report by The Training Costs Review Committee in 1991 (Smith 1999, p.109) suggested the freeing up of the VET market. This effectively meant that Institutes of Technical and Further Education (TAFE) which traditionally had been the providers of vocational education in Australia, would compete for funding with a range of other adult education providers such as Community Houses and other community centres, Adult Multicultural Education Service (AMES) and some private providers who gain Registered Training Organisation (RTO) status and accreditation to deliver training programs. In general, TAFE still dominates apprentice training but by 1998, there were 3579 non-TAFE providers conducting other vocational education (Smith 1999, p.109), mostly at the lower Certificate level of the Australian Qualification Framework (AQF), a set of twelve nationally agreed qualification standards.

The freeing up of the vocational education and training market coincided with decreasing levels of immigration and government funding for ESL courses. Education centres which have traditionally catered to the language and literacy needs of students of Language Background other Than English (LBOTE), such as Adult Multicultural Education Service (AMES), Adult and Community Education (ACE) Centres, and some private and university based English language centres, have been forced to rethink the nature of the courses they offer and to seek alternative sources of funding. Increasingly, organisations which have never been involved in the provision of vocational education are moving into the delivery of courses which are either entirely vocationally focused or combine language education with a vocational orientation. The shift away from funding for needs-based language courses towards vocationally oriented courses has had an enormous impact on teachers in the adult sector. Many teachers with language teaching expertise and qualifications increasingly find themselves teaching vocational courses for which they have little education and preparing students for workplaces of which they have no personal experience.

Many courses are aimed at unemployed people. A decline in the Australian manufacturing industry in the 1990s has left many blue-collar workers unemployed (Waterhouse, Wilson and Ewer 1999, p.8), while increasing numbers of positions in the services and technology sectors are unfilled (Waterhouse et al. 1999, pp. 8, 11). Often, unemployed people find themselves re-training for the services sector or gaining some level of computer literacy in an attempt to move into these areas. The continuation of unemployment benefits for the long-term unemployed or those at risk of long term unemployment, is frequently tied to participation in training programs, most commonly, those with a vocational orientation. People of language background other than English (LBOTE) are highly represented in unemployment figures (ABS 2001) and work focused training programs (James and Coleman 1998, p. 404).

While greater numbers of TESOL and Literacy teachers have gained specialist qualification in recent years, teacher qualifications are not always valued in the adult vocational
education sector, and are not mandatory (Chappell 2001). Many practitioners in the field who may have been employed primarily for their industry experience, have only completed short "Train the Trainer" courses, designed to instruct them in the most fundamental modes of education delivery. Frequently, these educators find themselves delivering courses to classes of huge student diversity, consisting of students of varied ages, abilities and workplace experience, some with limited English language proficiency or with social or learning difficulties.

Adult workplace education within industry contexts in Australia has also undergone changes. The provision of discrete English language education courses for workers of LBOTE has diminished and is increasingly replaced by integrated Training Packages (TPs) aimed at providing nationally accredited qualification pathways. In these packages language and literacy skill development is integrated with industry skills. However, this system is in transition and there have been concerns raised about the effectiveness of these TPs in catering for the language needs of learners (Sanguinetti and Hartley 2000). In their report on a series of projects investigating the integrated TPs, Sanguinetti and Hartley comment on "tensions and contradiction between short term expectations of productivity outcomes and the construction of training as investment in organisational learning" (2000, p.31). Employers increasingly expect greater productivity and returns for their training dollar and very few are interested in providing education for their workers which is not specifically linked to solely workplace outcomes resulting in immediate economic gain for the company.

Adult education in the past has generally been marked by the voluntary nature of student participation, especially in regard to courses conducted away from industry sites. However, recently, anecdotal evidence suggests a shift in student motivation and purposes for study. In many instances, those people who are considered 'long-term unemployed', that is unemployed for fifty-two weeks or more (Centrelink 2001), are pressured by employment services personnel such as case managers, to attend courses as a requirement of government policy which links attendance at training to the continuation of unemployment benefits. Others who do not fall within particular categories of 'long-term unemployed', or are 'at risk of long-term unemployment' are increasingly being asked to pay for tuition on a fee-for-service basis if they choose to attend classes. Similarly, workers in industry are often pressured into attending training courses by their managers and supervisors because much workplace training is linked to wage increases and other incentives.

The development of VET as competency-based training, that is, education with a focus on pre-defined, performative outcomes rather than holistic learner-centred pedagogies, has altered the nature of curriculum design and assessment and is regarded by some educators as diminishing the professional autonomy of teachers. Furthermore, the wide-spread introduction of competitive tendering has meant that adult education centres, both TAFE and non-TAFE are no longer assured of on-going funding and are required to submit tenders on a yearly basis or even more frequently, with the future success of tenders often linked to positive employment outcomes or favourable responses from relevant industry bodies. Additionally, the freeing up of the adult education market in general, has meant that AMES now has to compete with TAFE and other providers for funding to conduct the Certificate in Spoken and Written English (CSWE), a three level certificate course which AMES developed and over which they had monopoly, prior to the marketisation of adult education.

These changes to funding have had disturbing consequences for the employment conditions of teachers in the adult education sector. In recent years a lack of ongoing funding has resulted in a marked increase in contract or sessional employment (Blackmore and Angwin 1997, Bertone 2000). The competitive tendering process has also diminished the networks and co-operation which once existed between adult education centres. Teachers often find
themselves professionally isolated from their peers in other adult education centres. In a study by Brown, Seddon, Angus and Rushbrook (1996), both TAFE and school teachers, conscious of an increasingly competitive education market, comment on their "increasing sense of isolation which has heightened as other schools and institutions have become perceived as competitors" (reported in Seddon 1997, p. 229). In an increasingly market-driven approach to education, many teachers in adult education are concerned about the commercialisation of their courses, the need to ‘sell’ their courses and to meet the demands of industry rather than cater to what they perceive as the needs of their students. Although the shift from ‘supply’- driven VET programs to ‘demand'- driven programs embracing ‘user choice’ (Waterhouse et al. p.21) has aimed to produce "greater institution responsiveness to customers" (Maddock 1998, p.271), it appears that the key ‘customers’ are not in fact, students, but industries who directly ‘buy’ education services for their workers or governments who ‘buy’ education for the unemployed. In many instances, teachers are delivering services to ‘clients;’ once-removed from the people actually sitting in their classes. These changes in the adult education sector have affected the ways in which teachers see themselves as professionals and carry out their teaching practices and the ways in which they identify and are identified as professionals. It is against this backdrop of change that this study into vocational education teacher identity is located. It is an exploration of the ways in which teacher identity is shaped by the discourses of vocational education and played out through what they do in their classrooms.

The study: a contextual overview

Data for this study were collected from teachers in four different adult VET sites in Victoria, via semi-structured interviews and classroom observations. The first of the sites, KC Automotive Industries is a vehicle and vehicle components manufacturer where foundry workers are studying the Foundry Elective of the Vehicle Industry Certificate, a course and qualification recognised throughout the vehicle manufacturing industry. The second site is Fort Hill AMES where unemployed students are studying Certificate II in Information technology. The third site, Swan Valley English Language Centre is attached to a university and has traditionally offered language education courses for overseas and local second language learners. The class at this centre from which data were collected, comprised unemployed people studying Certificate II in Professional Communication Skills. The fourth of the sites, Rochedale Skills Training Centre offers Certificate II in Hospitality to unemployed people.

A brief profile for each of the teachers in the study is as follows:

Mohindar

Mohindar, who self-identifies as a trainer is male, Indian born, thirty-seven years of age and has a Diploma in Hotel management obtained from the Institute of Bombay in India. Prior to coming to Australia in 1992 he worked as the Assistant Catering Manager at the Taj Intercontinental, a prestigious five star hotel in Bombay. He has been at Rochedale Workskills Training Centre since 1995 where he teaches Certificate II in Hospitality. He has extensive experience in the hospitality industry and works part time as a barman in a Melbourne hotel in addition to his job at Rochedale. He has no teacher qualifications but completed Certificate in Workforce Training Category II in 1997.

Claudia

Claudia, the teacher of the class is forty-two years of age, Australian born with Polish and Croatian parentage. She speaks Serbo-Croatian and French fluently and has been a teacher
for nineteen years, working in secondary schools as a teacher of French and then in a number of AMES centres for over ten years, mainly as a teacher of ESL. She has taught Certificate II in Information Technology for over two years at Fort Hill AMES where she has been for a little over a year after having been forced to accept a transfer when her previous centre declared her in excess of their staffing requirements. She has one of the few remaining ongoing positions within the AMES sector. In addition to teaching computing she also teaches ESL at Fort Hill. Claudia has a Bachelor of Arts and a Diploma of Education.

Jill

Jill is fifty-two years of age, Anglo-Australian and began her teaching career as a primary teacher in 1967. She has been an industry trainer for nine years, teaching in various industry settings in suburban Melbourne and has taught the Vehicle Industry Certificate for eight years at KC Automotive Industries. She also has extensive experience in curriculum writing for industry training and has worked on the development of several projects during the course of her career including the development of the curriculum for the Foundry Elective in the VIC. She has a primary teaching qualification which she obtained in the late sixties and a Graduate Diploma in Special Education.

Joan

Joan is fifty-two years of age, Anglo-Australian and an experienced teacher. She taught in secondary schools for many years as a German and French teacher before coming to Swan Valley English language Centre where she has worked for 15 years as an ESL teachers in a variety of courses. This is the third year she has taught Certificate II in Professional Communication Skills. She has a Bachelor of Arts degree and a Diploma of Education.

Constructing Secret Stories of Vocational Adult Education Practice

The discursive environment in which teachers in this study work has shaped their identities in complex and sometimes contradictory ways. Their classrooms are sites of interaction between old and new discourses of policy and pedagogy as well as sites of pedagogical and personal resistance and compliance. The changes to adult education have had real and material effects on educators’ working conditions, including increased accountability, pressure to ‘teach more in less time’, decreased job security and diminishing networks of collegiality. Although these changes are clearly unsettling for all the educators in this study, those who self-identify as teachers, rather than trainers, express particular and serious concern over the ways in which they are positioned by the discourses of vocational education as trainers of competency based education. This positioning is clearly contrary to how they think of themselves as professionals and how they want to carry out their classrooms practices. Jill, Claudia and Joan are very certain about what it is that distinguishes teaching from training and they are keen to disassociate themselves from the practices they think the term ‘training’ implies. They believe training is a one-dimensional transmission of knowledge from trainer to student, whereas teaching is about developing and nurturing student ability in carefully planned ways. Teachers, who are university educated in the study of learning and teaching, understand the ways in which people learn and are concerned about the individual needs of their students beyond the occupational skills development specified by the prescribed vocational curriculum. For Joan, Jill and Claudia, the term ‘trainer’ represents everything they are not.

Claudia represents herself as a skilled educator, whose philosophies of teaching are at odds with what she perceives to be training. When asked whether she regards herself as a teacher or a trainer she replies, “teacher, very much a teacher!” She says of training:
It’s about leading people through something but umm… but no… revisions. Training takes place in shorter period of time and there’s no chance for revising or going back over anything, you just go step step step through it. I like the students to understand why they’re doing something. Because I think you retain it more and I don’t think training really does that, I think training just shows you what button to click to get what effect whether you understand why you’d ever want to use that or not.

However, she resists what she regards as the pressure from AMES management to train and describes her practices in very different terms.

I demonstrate, I model, going through it with the students and I then I set up some sort of exercise where they can reproduce what it is they’ve learned and every exercise builds up from the previous one, so if they’ve learnt how to copy and paste in one lesson then in the next exercise which might be teaching them to justify text there’ll be an element of copying and pasting as well so that there’s… you know, you’re revising all the time what you’ve done before.

Similarly, Jill also positions trainers and training in fairly negative terms and is eager to point out that she does not share their predefined and routine ways of working.

I’ve watched many trainers at work and they just sort of go through the ropes, I mean it’s just a matter of getting in there and repeating the same thing for twelve classes one after another and it comes out of a procedure manual, step one do this, step two and this point do this and do that, and this is when you use this word. It’s like a practiced play which isn’t what I’m about (Jill).

However, in contrast, Mohindar’s identification as a trainer rather than a teacher is mainly based on his experience in the hospitality industry and is in keeping with the findings of a number of studies of TAFE teachers for whom direct industry experience is one of the most important factors in the ways in which they perceive of themselves as educators (Chappell 2000). When asked how he identifies, as a trainer or teacher, he says:

Trainer for want of a better word really, but I think it's more to do with .. see, I still work part time on Friday and Saturday nights in a bar. Just behind the bar. Yes, I really think it's more, yeah, industry trainer.

The discourses of teaching with which Jill Joan and Claudia strongly identify, conflict in many ways with the discourses of vocational education. The teachers regard prescriptive competency-based curriculum as controlling and constraining because it homogenises the needs of students around a particular skills base, and allows educators little freedom to address the individual needs of their students. They are especially concerned about the ways in which the highly prescriptive competency-based curriculum of their courses has defined their practices and eroded their professional autonomy. They claim they have little freedom to make decisions about what are often considered the most fundamental aspects of professional teaching practice; what they will teach, how long they will take to teach it and what elements of the course they will assess. Although Mohindar does not regard prescriptive outcomes based education in general as problematic, he considers the prescriptive curriculum of Certificate II in Hospitality problematic because it does not address what he perceives as his students’ needs for up-to-date knowledge about hospitality industry practices. To some degree, each of the teachers reconciles the contradictions and tensions
between the discourses of teaching and those of training by constructing a ‘hybridised’ version of the sanctioned curriculum which more effectively addresses what they perceive as their students’ needs.

The work of Connelly and Clandinin which examines the ways in which teacher knowledge is shaped by what they refer to as the professional knowledge landscape (2000, 1995), is focused on school contexts. However, it is useful here in understanding the ways in which vocational adult education teachers function in contested spaces, amidst competing discourses and education power structures. According to Clandinin and Connelly, "sacred stories", are stories originating from power sources such as curriculum and policy makers and funding bodies in out-of-classroom places" (Clandinin and Connelly 1996, p.25). The sacred stories of vocational adult education are constructed around discourses of outcomes based curriculum and assessment, accountability, competition and performativity. Huber and Whelan who use Clandinin and Connelly's conceptual framework in their research on teacher identity and marginalisation, claim that the theoretical knowledge on which sacred stories are built, "arrives into the lives of teachers in the form of new curriculum materials, textbooks, and policy mandates. They are scripted into teachers’ lives, often with no substantive place for conversation about what is “funneled down". Teachers are often left to make sense of these materials behind their classroom doors in secrecy and silence, negotiating these theories in relation to their story to live by" (1999, pp.387-388). The teachers in this study make little sense of the sacred stories of VET which focus on prescriptive outcomes based curriculum. Within the privacy of their classrooms, Joan and Jill in particular, 'interpret' and negotiate curriculum in ways which are not in keeping with the sacred stories of vocational education. Clandinin and Connelly claim that "Classrooms are, for the most, safe places, generally free from scrutiny, where teachers are free to live stories of practice. These lived stories are essentially secret ones" (1996 p.25). Joan’s and Jill’s lived secret stories of practice focus on the ‘remaking’ of the curriculum in various ways to address what they perceive as their students' needs beyond what is covered in the sanctioned curriculum. For example, Joan recognises that her students may suffer discrimination in the workplace, or that they may be denied success in a competitive job market because of their racial and ethnic difference. She therefore places a high priority on teaching them about ‘Australian’ culture, a problematic issue in itself, believing that the students need to understand ‘our’ culture so they can be more like us and assimilate into Australian society more easily. She prioritises this as one of the most important of her students’ needs and includes culture-learning throughout most of the modules which comprise Certificate II in Professional Communication Skills, even though ‘culture’ is not a specifically targeted area in the course description. In her view, related to the students’ needs to learn about Australian culture, is their need to understand what constitutes acceptable social behaviour in Australia.

Part of our interaction in class involves learning polite behavior, polite behavior relevant to Australian society. I correct their abruptness and their rudeness, I put it down as a kind of cultural misunderstanding. "Maybe you when you said that you didn’t mean to be rude to me, but you are being extremely rude to me. Please don’t say that to people because in our culture that’s considered rude". And we talk a lot about polite behavior and how .. I say to them "if I think you’re saying something to me or to someone else in the class and I think it’s not acceptable in terms of social customs I'll tell you and you mustn't mind because I’m telling you because I don’t want you to do this while you’re out in the workplace. People won’t like you if you say that, people won’t like you if you do that in the workplace".

In some ways Joan teaches ‘Australian’ culture at the expense of teaching content which is pivotal to the stated aims of the course and important to the students themselves who
Prioritise English language competence over learning about culture. Jill believes that the assessment requirements of the VIC do not cater for the particular needs of her second language learner students so she finds alternative ways for the men to express their content knowledge, other than through the conventional and sanctioned written English assessment tasks.

So I'm happy to accept any way they want to show me. Diagrams, I'm very big on them drawing to show me. Anything that we can do to try to get this idea across, in fact I like them to do a lot of sketching in big graphics because I think it’s going to be something they’ll find a good tool, a useful tool. And they get up to the whiteboard and say "Look what I’m trying to show you is this. Look here’s the thing here".

Of the three teachers, it is Claudia who seems not to deviate from the prescribed curriculum, although she too, finds it unsatisfactory because of its highly prescriptive nature and lack of opportunity for her to devise learning tasks which best suit her particular students.

Mohindar also, constructs secret stories of practice, but his secret stories of practice do not centre on resistance to CB occupational skills training and his positioning as a trainer. In similar ways to the women, he also identifies students’ needs as extending beyond the sanctioned course curriculum. In order to maximize the students’ employment opportunities, he believes they needs to be taught current hospitality practice rather than what he regards as the outdated theoretical knowledge which comprises much of Certificate II in Hospitality, an Australian Quality Frameworks (AQF) accredited course. Although he does not necessarily omit course content which he considers out-of-step with current industry practices, he explicitly points out to the students why the 'legitimate' and sanctioned course content is irrelevant.

Well... it's like this, they've given us the curriculum, sometimes I do things that are not in the curriculum or I do things that are slightly outside the curriculum simply because I don’t agree with the curriculum. There are things that the book says to us should be done in a certain way but then you very often find that the industry doesn't do it that way so there's no point in me following the curriculum by the book or by the letter of the book ... and I've told the students that. So yeah … I am guided by the curriculum, for sure, obviously being an accredited course we have to make sure the curriculum is ... you know, their requirements are satisfied but I do take the liberty of pointing out to the course participants that it's not happening like that outside.

Unlike the women, he is not resistant to be positioned as a trainer of outcomes based curriculum, but it resistant to being positioned as a trainer of outdated outcomes based curriculum. Mohindar also sees the course as an opportunity to challenge some of his students’ racist attitudes. He does so skillfully and through discussion about racism and discrimination as it relates to the hospitality industry.

I can say to them "everyone's equal da da da” but I really try and get hospitality related examples. Obviously they’re going to be working with different people and there is a number of large, non-English speaking Eastern Europeans and Asians working in Melbourne restaurants and hotels so I make the point to them that listen, discrimination’s not acceptable.. For example, Yothu Yindi’s lead singer walked into a restaurant in St. Kilda.... I used that example when that happened, remember that? They wouldn't serve
him, thought he was an Aboriginal drinking from up the street. So, I mean yeah, those sorts of examples ... I make them very aware that there is no room for discrimination.

However, these secret stories of practice are different to the stories the educators tell when they move into an out-of-classroom place, into a public education space where they might interact with their bosses, administrators, policy and curriculum makers, produce written reports about courses or students, write funding applications or submit completed competency assessments. These stories are what Clandinin and Connelly call "cover stories".

When teachers move out of their classrooms into the out-of-classroom place on the landscape, they often live and tell cover stories, stories in which they portray themselves as experts, certain characters whose teacher stories fit within the acceptable range of the story of school being lived in the school. Cover stories enable teachers whose teacher stories are marginalized by whatever the current story of school is to continue to practice and to sustain their teacher stories (1996, p. 25).

Cover stories are more likely to be constructed when there is a 'risk' associated with not adhering to sanctioned policies and curriculum. The shift towards teacher (and student) accountability in adult vocational education has been accompanied by "a shift in emphasis onto 'performativity' (ie. being seen to perform) of individuals and institutions and administration to indicate proof of performance. Only when performance can be measured can further claims be made for further resources" (Blackmore and Angwin 1997, p.4). The performance expected of educators in the adult education sector increasingly centres around teaching and assessing predefined curriculum and outcomes within a set period of time and monitoring compulsory student attendance. While the educators in this study are on-going permanent employees of the institutions where they work, and their jobs are not necessarily insecure in the same ways as the majority of their colleagues who are employed on a contract or sessional basis, in a generally uncertain and insecure work environment, there is still the threat of forced redundancy or transfer. Further funding for each of the courses is dependant on achieving particular outcomes in terms of employment or study places in further education, or in the case of KC Automotive Industries, employer satisfaction. It is hardly surprising that the stories the educators tell publicly about their practices are aligned with the priorities of those who make and oversee the implementation of policy and curriculum and those who are responsible for continued course funding. Jill is acutely aware of the expectations upon her to adhere to the prescribed VIC curriculum and to 'deliver the goods' to the industry which funds the course and keeps her in employment. Her description of herself as a "chameleon" reflects the ways in which she negotiates the different discourses of education and industry, fulfilling the company's expectations of her as a service provider while also attempting to address in the most effective ways possible, what she perceives as her students' needs. Similarly, Mohindar's silence in relation to not reporting breaches of the student attendance requirement to Centrelink, constructs a cover story of compliance.

**Crossing Boundaries Between Teaching and Training**

Joan, Jill and Claudia's secret stories of practice are significantly different from my observations of their practices. The women's representations of themselves as teachers and the dichotomy between teaching and training is a very strong theme throughout this research. It illuminates tensions and contradictions between the ways in which the women describe their practices and what I observe and judge to be the reality of their practices, as well as raising some significant issues around what constitutes good vocational classroom
practice. In some cases, what the teachers describe disparagingly as training practices, are those practices in which they often engage themselves. This is particularly the case for Claudia whose ‘lock-step’ approach to teaching Certificate II in Information Technology resembles what she describes as training, even though during our interview, she describes her practice in vastly different ways to this, suggesting she never ‘trains’. To a lesser degree, Jill’s practice is also teacher centred and involves the transmission of large amounts of knowledge to her students. Joan talks about her classroom in ways which promote it as egalitarian – the pinnacle of ‘good’ teaching practice, a kind of mini version of an utopian society where everyone has the right to speak and to be heard.

However, this view of her practice is problematic on at least two accounts. Firstly, her view of her classroom as egalitarian ignores the ways in which, she, like the teachers in Sanguinetti’s research, is an agent of “institutional power, as well as of the power of class, educational status and Australian-ness” (1999, p246). Like all teachers, she is concerned with the production of knowledge and ‘truth’, a form of power which can operate in both constraining and productive ways. Gore’s study (1995) about power relations in teaching shows that techniques of disciplinary power were regularly deployed in teaching practices across four different contexts including non-institutional settings such as a feminist reading group and a discussion group. To claim that a classroom can be totally democratic is to ignore the power relations which inevitably exist to some degree in all classrooms. Secondly, Joan’s classes are highly directive and teacher centred - she decides what will be learned and how it will be learned. She also interacts with students in ways which serve to reinforce the power imbalance between them. Although she says she privileges learner autonomy, and an egalitarian classroom environment in which students have the right to negotiate some of the curriculum, I observed very little of this happening.

These differences between the Jill, Joan and Claudia’s representations of themselves as practitioners and my observations of their practices as training is significant, given their adamant rejection of the terms ‘trainer’ and ‘training’ as ways of describing themselves and what they do. It is possible that they are insufficiently reflective of their practices and that they have not fully grasped the ‘reality’ of what they do in their classes. However, it seems that it is probably more than this, that they have constructed themselves as educators of a particular type, operating in particular ways which are fuelled by past practices, contexts, experiences or ideals. It is also possible that they are telling me stories about their practices that they think I want to hear. Although the work of Clandinin and Connelly has been useful in the discussion of the ways in which teachers resist the current discourses of vocational adult education, I am also cautious about regarding secret, cover and sacred stories as discrete stories easily separated from each other and secret and cover stories as lies and truths. Rather, they interact in complex ways and are overlapping and changing. The context in which teacher stories are told, can shape them as either cover or secret stories. For example, the teachers tell me about their secret stories of practice during our interviews and talk about the ways in which they deviate from curriculum, ignore regulations of accountability and so on. However, they may be telling me cover stories. My positioning as a former teacher in this sector, serves to complicate our relationship and creates the potential for the teachers to either confide in me about the ways in which they resist the discourses of vocational education or alternatively, allows them to disguise their compliance by telling me the stories they think I want to hear.

The teachers’ strong and unmistakable identifications as teachers rather than trainers can be seen as a form of resistance to the discourses of adult VET and the ways in which those discourses shape their identities in ways they don’t like. Their move into vocational adult education has been accompanied by a general shift away from professional teacher autonomy. The culture of teaching with which they identify is increasingly threatened by a market driven approach - their previous experiences and knowledges are not always
relevant or valued in this changed context. To some degree they feel ‘under siege’. Their struggle to maintain the professional status they feel they are losing, might be played out through an affirmed identification of themselves as ‘teachers’ distinct from the new roles they are increasingly pressured to perform as trainers.

Unlike the teachers, Mohindar does not talk about his practices using the meta-language of education and classrooms. However, his classroom practices appear to be more similar to those which the teachers refer to as ‘teaching’. Although he too devotes significant amounts of classroom time to a ‘lecturing’ style approach to pedagogy, generally he incorporates more learner centred approaches and activities into his classes than the teachers and requires students to take responsibility for their learning much more frequently. Although it is difficult to determine why this is the case, it may be because he feels both more comfortable and at ease with the content of what he teaches and the training environment in which he works than do Joan, Jill and Claudia. He may be freer to adopt some of the good practices with which the women identities are inextricably bound, understanding them simply as effective training strategies.

The trainer and especially the teachers in this study, are ‘locked’ into narrow understandings of what constitutes training and teaching and who can do either. They represent themselves in particular ways, identifying as one or the other. However, in effect, they continually cross boundaries between teaching and training, taking up positions within each of these discourses at different times, sometimes consciously sometimes unconsciously. This crossing of boundaries between practices which have been constructed as diametrically opposed, points to the ways in which teaching training distinctions can be problematic and it also indicates that the Postmodern classroom is a complex site of discursivity where nonunitary and fractured teacher identities are enacted through classroom practices in ways which are sometimes contradictory.

In conclusion, these short extracts show the inherent contradictions in the practices of VET teachers and trainers and the ways in which they position and reposition themselves as professionals within the adult education sector.
References

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